

19 November 2025

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Tēnā koe Sue

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND MEETINGS ACT Request: 2025-60

Thank you for your email of Sunday 2 November 2025 to the Carterton District Council requesting the following information:

"I'm working on a longer form story about responses to emergencies [like weather events] in the region.

During the events in October, councils made a decision to stand up the Wairarapa Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to coordinate the response.

Can you let me know what this means in practice? What sort of events could people expect the EOC to be stood up?

Who would co-ordinate it once it was running [would this be councils, mayors, or FENZ people or all of them]?

Where [which district] would the operation HQ be or would this vary depending on the event?

Finally how would communications with the public typically work? Would this be mainly social media, or radio?

Do you have advice for people generally for them to keep in mind for emergency events that you'd like included in the story?"

Your request has been considered under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act).

Context

Wairarapa Emergency Management is a shared council function that coordinates activities across the Wairarapa region, including the four 'R's of emergency management: readiness, risk reduction, response, and recovery.

An emergency management office was established on 1 July 2025 to consolidate emergency management response functions across the three Wairarapa councils and manage recovery activities. A temporary Recovery Office was established and funded by Central Government through to 30, June 2025 after Cyclone Gabrielle.

Prior to this, there was a designated on call-Controller (a Masterton District Council staff member, but CDEM-Civil Defence Emergency Management was not their BAU) across the three councils, a part time Welfare Manager and support from WREMO, the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office.

The Emergency Management Wairarapa office now has a fulltime Manager and part-time Welfare Manager and continues to be supported by WREMO. Emergency Management Wairarapa is supported by the South Wairarapa, Carterton and Masterton District Councils and works with the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) and WREMO.

During the events in October, councils made a decision to stand up the Wairarapa Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to coordinate the response. Can you let me know what this means in practice?

The Wairarapa Emergency Operations Centre (Wairarapa EOC) is activated when an emergency event could overwhelm the resources of a single council or councils within the Wairarapa. Depending on the size and complexity of emergency event, a dedicated and pre-identified team is able to work virtually or from the physical Wairarapa EOC.

Activation of the Wairarapa EOC may be achieved through the following: Council Chief Executive, Council Crisis Management Team or emergency services requesting support of the Wairarapa EOC through the WREMO Duty officer, WREMO EMA or Local Controller, i.e.:

- WREMO Emergency Management Advisor (EMA) advising the Local Controller of a warning that has been received through the WREMO Duty Officer
- An event is experienced e.g., earthquake and the Wairarapa EOC is self-activated, or,
- Group Controller (WREMO) directing the Local Controller to activate e.g. to support another EOC. Throughout the Local Controller will, where practicable, work with council CEs before an activation to prioritise staff resourcing of the EOC.

What sort of events could people expect the EOC to be stood up?

Wairarapa EOC operates under CIMS (Coordinated Incident Management System), a framework used in New Zealand to ensure different agencies and organisation can coordinate their response to emergency events of any scale by using consistent principles, structures and terminology.

To clarify, an *emergency* event the EOC is *activated* for are defined by the following:

Emergency (S.4 of the CDEM Act 2002) means a situation that:

- (a) is the result of any happening, whether natural or otherwise, including, without limitation, any explosion, earthquake, eruption, tsunami, land movement, flood, storm, tornado, cyclone, serious fire, leakage or spillage of any dangerous gas or substance, technological failure, infestation, plague, epidemic, failure of or disruption to an emergency service or a lifeline utility, or actual or imminent attack or warlike act; and
- (b) causes or may cause loss of life or injury or illness or distress or in any way endangers the safety of the public or property in New Zealand or any part of New Zealand; **and**
- (c) cannot be dealt with by emergency services, or otherwise requires a significant and coordinated response under this Act. When activated, the Wairarapa EOC and is run from Waiata House, 27 Lincoln Road, Masterton and resourced by staff from South Wairarapa, Carterton, Masterton District Councils, WREMO and Greater Wellington Regional Council.

It is important to note that activating the Wairarapa EOC does not automatically Declare a State of Emergency. This is a separate process involving the Mayor or appropriate elected official to transfer powers to the local controller where the response requires a significant and coordinated response that emergency services cannot handle alone.

Who would co-ordinate it once it was running [would this be councils, mayors, or FENZ people or all of them]?

Emergency Services, Government Agencies and Emergency Management work closely together as either the Lead or supporting agency.

When the Wairarapa EOC is activated for a council responsible activity, the on-call duty Controller would take the lead for the operational components of the activation, co-ordinating across council, council region and with the relevant stakeholders.

Mayors are provided with key information on the event to share with their communities to ensure people know of the emergency and what to do to remain safe.

For smaller regular events, e.g. flooding, the council communication teams provide that information direct to their communities via council communication channels and local media, where appropriate.

Events that the EOC would take the lead on include:

- Severe weather
- Floods
- Earthquakes
- Tsunami
- Solar Weather
- Landslide
- Volcanic activity
- Utility failure.

Events where the EOC would provide support, if requested from the Lead Agency (identified in brackets) include:

- Pandemic (Health NZ)
- Fire (FENZ)
- Transport (NZ Police)
- Terrorism (NZ Police)
- Hazardous substances (FENZ)
- Droughts at national or local level (MPI)
- Outbreaks of animal-related disease e.g. Foot and Mouth (MPI).

Where [which district] would the operation HQ be or would this vary depending on the event?

The primary location of the Wairarapa EOC is at Waiata House, 27 Lincoln Road, Masterton. If that building or location is unavailable, the Wairarapa EOC would operate virtually or from another location within Masterton or from other locations across the Wairarapa.

Finally, how would communications with the public typically work? Would this be mainly social media, or radio?

Within the CIMS framework, the PIM (Public Information Management) team would prepare all key messages to advise of the emergency event and how people, their whānau and wider community can remain safe.

Messaging will be consistent and aligned with national or regional messaging but could include local content where appropriate.

These messages would be disseminated across all media channels. For larger events, Information will be provided to media via the Mayors, their appointed officials, the local council CE or the Local Controller. This messaging would also go out via our Wairarapa Welfare Committee and the Rural Advisory Group which has a membership of 60+ organisations, including industry groups, local and national agencies, Government and Local Body departments. For smaller and more regular events, council comms teams are likely to be the main conduit for messaging.

Generally, PIM teams will utilise all available means of communication with a focus on social media (i.e. Facebook), Council websites, Antenna, email and text. During recent wind events, MoreFM in Masterton was broadcasting live, enabling real-time local updates to be shared.

Where electricity supplies are interrupted, this can affect the ability of people to access online, email, and cellphone communication, making battery-powered transistor radios invaluable.

Please note, the Council proactively publishes LGOIMA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at comms@cdc.govt.nz. If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Geoff Hamilton
Chief Executive
Carterton District Council